

# SOCIALIST APPEAL

FOR A MASS PARTY OF LABOR!

Election 2013 and the Working Class  
Interview with SEIU 1199 Delegate  
Trotsky on the US Labor Movement  
Zombies and the Class Struggle  
Marxist Economics: What is Value?

## Capitalism, Exploitation, and Inequality

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

EDITORIAL.....	02
GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN.....	03
HOLIDAY CONSUMERISM.....	04
SEIU 1199 DELEGATE.....	05
ZOMBIES & CLASS STRUGGLE.....	06
MARXIST ECONOMICS.....	08
MARXISM AND WOMEN.....	10
TED GRANT ON IMPERIALISM.....	11
TROTSKY ON US LABOR.....	12
FIGHTING FUND / WELLRED.....	13
BIG BUSINESS VS. CULTURE.....	14
OUR PROGRAM.....	15
WORLD-WIDE INEQUALITY.....	16

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## Election 2013 and Consciousness

Given the lack of opportunities for political expression in the US, even off-year elections provide important insights into where things stand politically and in which direction they are moving. Frustration with incumbents and disgust with “politics as usual” has reached record highs. Only 9% of Americans think Congress is doing a “good job.” A record low want their own representatives reelected. Just weeks after coming out bruised but on top in the showdown with Republicans over the government shutdown, President Obama’s rating is at its lowest ever—just 39%—lower even than GW Bush at this point in his second term. Only 19% trust the government to do “what is right.”

This is an unprecedented situation with profound implications for the future. It is not simply this or that politician or this or that party in the doldrums; the entire system is being questioned.

As predicted, Bill de Blasio overwhelmingly won the NYC mayoral election. He is the first Democrat to head this traditionally Democratic-controlled city after two decades of Giuliani and Bloomberg. Many have illusions in his “liberal” credentials and promises, but the reality of the capitalist crisis in the world’s financial capital will force him to do the ruling class’s bidding, even if he does make some cosmetic changes. In fact, even before taking office, he is already toning down the unions’ expectations. Although he will enjoy a certain honeymoon period, a head-on clash with the city’s powerful labor movement cannot be put off indefinitely. With Democrat Andrew Cuomo as governor and de Blasio at the helm of the five boroughs, New Yorkers will now fully enter the “school of the Democrats.”

The Virginia governor race and the by-election in Alabama both show that the decisive layers of the ruling class will attempt to rein in the Tea Party and present a more “moderate face.” But this will only make it easier for the Democrats to “compromise” with them to make a deal for further austerity. Social Security, Medicare, and more are very much in danger. Given the crisis of capitalism, politicians of both ruling parties have no option but to continue to cut transit, close public schools and hospitals, slash food stamps, and worse.

We have explained many times in the past that as the US limps along after the worst economic downturn since World War II, the potential for big shifts in the country’s electoral politics is in the cards. But given the lack of a bold alternative by the labor leaders, the absence of a generalized militant left opposition inside the labor movement, and the weakness of the forces of Marxism, the working class as a whole does not yet have a real alternative to oppose the system. Although voter turnout in the latest elections was historically low in many areas, in those districts and on those issues where voters felt they had a say or could clearly reject the status quo, interest was palpably heightened.

This was the case, for example with the New Jersey referendum to increase the minimum wage, which will also include regular Cost of Living Adjustments. In SeaTac, Washington, a referendum to raise the minimum wage to \$15 was passed (pending final tallying of the votes). And in Seattle, Socialist Alternative’s Kshama Sawant narrowly defeated her Democratic rival for one of nine seats on the city council. These are encouraging shifts to the left, albeit within the narrow limits of the current political setup.

Millions of people are looking for a way out of the crisis. In the absence of a viable mass alternative for the working class, we will see many movements, candidates, and campaigns like Sawant’s in the years ahead. However, the idea that a small organization can somehow “force events” and substitute itself for the organic mass movement of the workers themselves is alien to Marxism and Bolshevism. The entire history of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st is a testament to this.

The historic task of the Marxists is to build the revolutionary leadership the working class deserves and requires; our task is not to “build the movement.” Many activists are frustrated that the workers have not yet moved despite the attacks and austerity. They want to accelerate the process through their own sacrifice and example. But frustration and impatience are the bane of revolutionaries—only through patient explanation can we win the workers to the Marxist perspective—not to mention that the experience of life under capitalism is the greatest teacher of all.

After more than five years of crisis and austerity—with even deeper cuts and greater hardship to come—the consciousness of US workers and youth continues to undergo a profound transformation. From apathy to action; from disinterest to engagement; from cynicism to a burning determination to change society. Election 2013 is yet another reminder that everything changes and continues to change. ♦

For in-depth analysis of Election 2013 visit: [socialistappeal.org](http://socialistappeal.org)



# The Tea Party and the Government Shutdown

JOHN PETERSON

For 16 days, the world waited with bated breath as the US government was shut down and teetered on the brink of default. At the eleventh hour, a deal was rammed through both the Senate and the House and signed by Obama, thus averting the immediate crisis. What are the ramifications for American politics and the capitalist system itself?

The showdown in Washington is at root a reflection of the intractable crisis of capitalism and the inability of the ruling class to continue ruling in the old way. The last few weeks have been a textbook example of how any attempt to reestablish economic stability can only lead to an increase in political and social instability.

In essence, the Tea Party represents the hysterical remains of the old Confederacy, of the Jim Crow South, and rural conservatism generally. Their ideas are a mish-mash of right-wing libertarian populism reflecting the interests of the frightened white petty bourgeoisie. However, compared to just a few decades ago, they have no substantial social base, as it has been whittled away by profound demographic and social changes, particularly since the 1960s. Although they have successfully dragged some ordinary workers behind them through their demagoguery and the lack of a bold alternative by the labor leaders, they above all express the fears and interests of the local magnates of small capital in small towns and cities across the country.

Despite the millions of dollars poured into their activities by billionaires such as the Koch brothers, and the artificial boost they have received in the mainstream media, the Tea Party's most vitriolic base of support could be described as the "big fish in little ponds." These "self-made" men and women both hate and covet the serious wealth and power of the big bourgeois in places like New York, Los Angeles, and Silicon Valley, but equally despise and dread the working class, blacks, Latinos, Asians, Arabs, the poor, and their "inferiors" generally.

They fear being swallowed up by the "big boys" on Wall Street as much as they worry about being overwhelmed by the working class. They are terrified by the leftward shift in society as reflected in attitudes toward issues such as gay marriage, immigrant and abortion rights, decriminalization of marijuana, and so on. They arrogantly rule the roost in many local and state governments, but are en-

raged at their growing impotence at the national level. As a result, they prefer to stymie and sabotage the workings of their own system of government than concede an iota of their power and influence.

After being defeated in the Civil War, their ancestors were able to perpetuate their local tyranny by derailing Reconstruction and imposing Jim Crow. Skillfully balancing between the various factions and interests in both ruling class parties, they prolonged their out-of-proportion influence well into the 20th century. The civil rights movement gave them an almighty fright, but with Nixon's blatantly racist "Southern Strategy" they were able to tip the balance in their favor a while longer.

Through gerrymandering, disenfranchisement of the poor and minorities, growing apathy among disenchanted voters, and the rise of the money and ideology-dominated primary system (as opposed to the old party bosses/machines used to select candidates for the general elections), they were able to punch well above their social weight in national politics for a whole historical period.

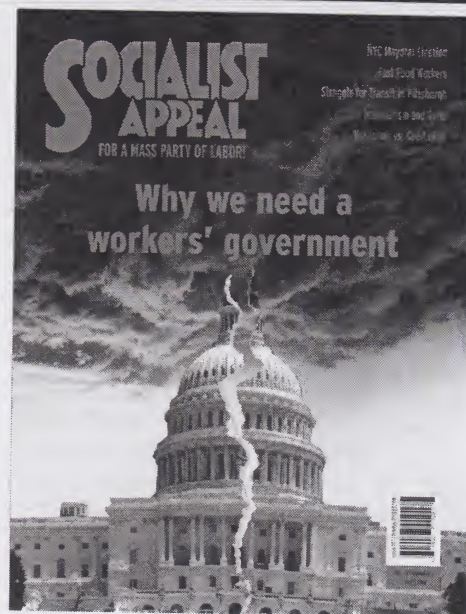
Powerful and well-connected senators and congressmen, mostly from the South, were thus able to impose the will of a minority on the nation as a whole. They ensured their constituents' loyalty by funneling billions in federal dollars to their home districts in the form of agricultural and other subsidies and contracts, and by building and maintaining military bases and other projects large and small.

But the tide of history is against them and there is little they can do about it in the long run. This all contributes to their paranoia and irrationality, resulting in the outrageous antics of their political representatives in Washington.

During the shutdown, 800,000 federal workers were furloughed and a million forced to work without pay. They have now been sent back to work and all will receive their unpaid wages. But their confidence in their job security will have been severely rattled.

The much-lauded deal represents a damaging setback for the Republicans, but will in the long run turn out to be a Pyrrhic victory for the Democrats. It contains little of real substance, and in effect only "kicks the can down the road" a few more months. As per the agreement, the government will now be funded through January 15, and the debt cushion has been extended through February 7 of next year.

The Republicans' original aim in all



of this—using their leverage over the budget and federal borrowing authority to defund or delay Obamacare—failed abjectly. The only change to the Affordable Care Act contained in the agreement was a tightening of the requirements to prove eligibility for government subsidies for health care, which is a blow aimed at those least able to afford coverage and navigate the "health exchange" process.

Also tacit in the agreement is the Democrats' openness to discuss the budget for the rest of 2014, with Tea Party austerity hawk Paul Ryan from Wisconsin at the helm. On the table will be cuts in "entitlement" programs such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and other remaining safety nets that millions of Americans rely on to survive. In the meantime, the sequester cuts (the result of a previous debt limit showdown) are locked in, and Obama has stated he wants an overall deal to avoid such regular showdowns. In reaching such a compromise, he has clearly stated that he is willing to negotiate with Republicans on anything and everything to make it happen—even if it includes cuts to the above previously "untouchable" social programs.

The polarization between the Democratic and Republican parties, and within the parties themselves, is a reflection of the polarization between different wings of the US ruling class. Their differences are not over whether or not to defend capitalism or whether or not impose austerity, but over how best to do it—preferably without provoking mass social unrest that could threaten capitalist rule itself. ♦

*Read full analysis at [socialistappeal.org](http://socialistappeal.org)*



# Black Friday: A Circus of Scarcity

LIZA R AND JOSE MANUEL

In the past two centuries, humankind has seen the development of our productive forces to a level previously undreamt of. What was once unimaginable is now commonplace. Never have we been so technologically advanced, never have we had such capability, never has there been such raw potential.

It is therefore a damning indictment of the capitalist order that our society languishes in hopeless disorder, driven to absurd contradictions by blind market forces, with no control over the great forces we have unleashed. Where there should be feasts there are famines. Where splendor is possible misery persists. Barbarism reigns on a mountain of human potential.

Every year, the day after Thanksgiving testifies to this reality. Major retailers announce massive "Black Friday" sales, and customers camp outside stores for hours before the doors open.

When they do, mobs rush in, and the rules of civilization yield to a shopping frenzy. Stabbings, shootings, fistfights, pepper spray attacks, trappings of other shoppers and employees, brawls between customers over who grabbed a product first, and on and on—these are the typical news stories of the day.

In 2008, a crowd of several thousand gathered in front of a Valley Stream, NY Walmart to count the minutes until the 5 a.m. opening. When the doors were opened, they poured in. Underneath the stampede was a Walmart worker, crushed by the human avalanche. Even when police arrived to rescue him, the crowd continued on, shoving past the cops; he was pronounced dead at 6:03 a.m.

Hundreds of shoppers stepped over that man. But obviously, not one of them arrived that morning with designs of murder. Most were probably there to ensure the Christmas happiness of their children. Yet once assembled, the quantity of the crowd assumed a quality of its own. Loving mothers and fathers were reduced to a level of animal existence, and the law of the jungle prevailed.

How can this be explained without unhelpful references to a mystical and static "human nature"? Only an honest appraisal of our material reality can impart an understanding. Falling wages, living conditions, and employment rates, generalized want for the many and endless opulence for the few, and a scarcity of basic resources for the majority—this combination is the father of barbarism.

All of this is reinforced by the general mood of anxiety, insecurity, and desperation that exposes a dying system.

The ruling class cannot dull the pain of their sick economy's new normalcy. On the contrary, their very culture exacerbates it, as the capitalists produce commodities not for human need, but for profit.

The credit bubble has burst, and the workers are without the money for shopping sprees after being robbed by the bankers and politicians. However, capitalism's cult of the commodity still remains. This has created a very explosive mixture of economic desperation and social agitation, and incidents like Black Friday stampedes confirm the prescience of the slogan: "Socialism or barbarism!"

Where is the way out of this nightmare of violence, alienation, and social decay? Only the mass movement of the working class can offer a way forward. Only the

workers of the world can rescue our future from the degeneration of the capitalist world by taking control of society away from the bosses and banishing their crises with the power of workers' democracy.

The movement of Walmart workers is an exciting harbinger of what our class is capable of. All across the country, Walmart workers are standing up and demanding higher wages, the right to unionize, and better conditions. Black Friday, a day when the retail giant expects its workers to miss Thanksgiving with their families to be overworked and placed in danger of customer violence, has become a rallying point for this movement.

The Marxists stand unconditionally in solidarity with the Walmart workers, and wherever a picket line is formed on Black Friday, we are ready to stand in support of our brothers and sisters.

Ultimately, however, a union at Walmart can only be the first step toward workers' victory. If we are to end the bosses' attacks once and for all, a new society must be built, in which the workers are in control of the state and the economy—socialism. All of the barbarism of capitalist decay would be left in the dustbin of history.

In a socialist world, consumption would be based on the conscious needs and desires of the masses, not the mania and delirium of 24/7 mass advertising, frantic clearance sales, and planned obsolescence. For the first time in our history, humanity would be in control of its fate and able to pursue our happiness unfettered from the bondage of the animal world and the market. No other cause has ever been as noble. ♦





# SEIU: Workers Must Have a Winning Strategy!

*Local 1199 is a union made up of hospital and nursing home workers. It was founded by a member of the Communist Party and when it was first organized, it received a lot of support from Martin Luther King Jr. Today, 1199 is affiliated to SEIU (Service Employee International Union) and the gains of the union members are under attack. Socialist Appeal spoke about this with Sam Swartz, a Marxist and 1199 union delegate, who works in a Long Island nursing home.*

**SA:** Sam, why are you a delegate in Local 1199?

**SS:** I believe that workers need to be united and organized, that is why I am active in the union. I have been a delegate for more than 15 years. The union magazine, *Our Life and Times*, did a piece on me last December. Alone, the boss can pick on a worker and make his life a living hell or even fire him. But the workers united have more power than the boss. The bosses need us to run the nursing home, but not vice versa. That is why I am a delegate, to bring the voice of the workers to the union leadership. I was just reelected unopposed this year. I campaigned on a program of no givebacks and for the union to break from its support of the bosses' parties, Democrats and Republicans, and help build a mass labor party.

**SA:** What are the problems facing nursing home workers?

**SS:** Our workers work very hard. They are helping disabled and elderly people. We are understaffed and yet we go above and beyond to help the residents. All we ask is for wages and benefits that would allow us and our families to live our lives with some comfort, dignity, and security. Instead, the bosses want to push us to poverty. Remember, the increases that we have gotten on average since the 1970s have not kept up with prices—our wages in effect have been cut.

**SA:** How are the nursing homes' contracts organized?

**SS:** There are two kinds of nursing homes: the "not-for-profit" homes with a contract with the League of Voluntary Hospitals and Homes tied to our National Benefit Fund (NBF), and the proprietary homes, that are "for-profit" and are in the Greater NY Fund. Some proprietary homes have "me too" agreements and their contracts are modeled on the League contract. The NBF provides superior benefits.

**SA:** The nursing home bosses say they need Local 1199 to give up wage increases and benefits, including cuts to the pension. They claim they don't have the money to pay the staff what they are getting. What do you say to this?

**SS:** First, the revenue made by all of the nursing homes, whether for-profit or not, comes from fees, insurance policies, Medicaid and Medicare. However, this revenue only comes in because workers are there to cook, clean, guide, train, exercise and otherwise take care of the residents. Without the workers, there is no service for the residents and no revenue coming in. Therefore, the executives' salaries and benefits and all of the profits come from unpaid labor of the workers. Some of the proprietary homes have owners that own 16 to 20 homes. Even in the League (Voluntary) homes, which are not-for-profit, a CEO can get a home, car, driver, and a salary much larger than my members make. If they want to cut, they can cut that!

**1199SEIU**  
United Healthcare Workers East

**SA:** Local 1199 is talking about a one-day strike. What are the issues?

**SS:** Many of the "me too" homes are trying to switch from the NBF to the lower benefits of the Greater NY Fund. The bosses in the League also want to reduce the NBF benefits. Also, the workers at the proprietary homes did not get the 2.5% raise that workers at the League homes just received. Local 1199 has not been on strike at these places since the late 1980s. The union leaders think a one-day strike will show them that we mean business.

**SA:** What role have Governor Cuomo and the New York state government played in all of this?

**SS:** Cuomo has cut Medicaid as part of his austerity program. Remember, every dollar cut from state Medicaid means we lose another dollar of matching funds from the federal government. Cuomo's cuts have created problems for the nursing homes. As part of his austerity, Cuomo has pushed for more proprietary homes with their lower labor costs, at the expense of the not-for-profit homes.

**SA:** How can the workers win this

battle against the bosses and the State of New York?

**SS:** First, we have to understand that the bosses are united against the workers. They use the fact that one set of workers has better benefits to divide us and drive all of our wages and benefits down. The union leadership should demand one benefit fund at the higher level, which means all Local 1199 employers should be in the NBF. Second, the union leadership must mobilize the membership and explain that these nursing homes cannot be run without the workers, and the for-profits will not make money if there is a strike. Third, this fight must be taken to the state government. It should be made clear that the state must reverse the Medicaid cuts and put adequate money into the homes. If the state wants to save money, then it should take over the homes and eliminate the profits and the bloated salaries and benefits of the top CEOs.

**SA:** How can this fight be won?

**SS:** The union leadership must take this seriously. The bosses everywhere are fighting the workers for givebacks. The only way to win is through mass mobilization of the membership and reaching out to labor allies. Any strikes at the homes must be coupled with mass demonstrations against Cuomo. Imagine if the demonstrations at the NYC office of the governor were so big, traffic was snarled in Midtown? The union leadership must reach out to the NYC Central Labor Council and other unions. An injury to one is an injury to all. State unions like CSEA/AFSCME and PEF (Public Employees Federation) took big hits from Cuomo. City workers are without contracts and they were forced to take a tier 6 pension from Cuomo as well. These unions could help build mass demonstrations. Local 1199 should also reach out to allies like students, the workers of the future, who have seen continual tuition increases.

**SA:** Any final thoughts on these upcoming battles?

**SS:** The 1199 leadership needs to take this very seriously and be prepared. If not, our members and the people we serve are going to suffer serious cuts. If you think, like I do, that SEIU and Local 1199 needs a leadership that has a winning strategy, so that when we fight, we will win, please contact me. We can build a caucus of members who want a stronger and more powerful union. ♦

[DelegateSam1199@gmail.com](mailto:DelegateSam1199@gmail.com)



# Capitalist Decay: Zombies and the Class Struggle

MARK RAHMAN & KEVIN NANCE

There has been a huge boom in the apocalyptic movie genre with dozens of such films, television shows, video games, and books being released in just the past decade. They have used meteors, pandemics, global infertility, aliens, vampires, monsters, global warming, and zombies—the reigning champions—to depict the crumbling of society and the end of civilization. This obsession with the apocalypse is not unprecedented; there have been many periods in human history when we have seen art and culture focusing on these dark subjects. But what is it today that causes cinema to turn so gloomy about our future, and why have zombies become such a popular way to depict this future?

The concept of zombies—in which a dead person is under the control of a sorcerer—has its origin in the folklore of indigenous West Africans. As a result of the slave trade, these ideas made their way to the Caribbean islands, where they gained ground, particularly in Haiti, where the economy was heavily dependent upon slavery. It was believed that dead bodies would be taken from their graves and reanimated, without any trace of their personality or their own willpower, to be put to work indefinitely.

This myth itself is a reflection of the hopelessness and despair that the Haitian slaves must have felt every day—they saw a reflection of their own existence in zombies. Death was seen as a release, a time when one doesn't have to toil as a slave anymore. The worst possible scenario was to die, and yet be enslaved forever—literally controlled in every way by a slave master taking over every aspect of the slave's life (or death?). After a long life of servitude, the slave is still not free from his master's bond as a zombie, deprived even of the thoughts in his head. This is the nightmare of zombieism that is again resonating through today's society.

The modern concept of zombies, as depicted in countless films, reflects a different kind of slavery: wage slavery. In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels explain how the capitalist system, as it developed modern industry, created a class that was no longer isolated, but a class that is brought together in social production—one that constitutes the vast majority of society—the working class. "What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers."

Zombies as portrayed in films like



*White Zombie* (1932)—the first of the genre—and *Revolt of the Zombies* (1936), follow the traditional Haitian folklore where zombies are dead bodies under the control of a sorcerer. The birth of the modern zombie came with director George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), which was largely influenced by Richard Matheson's classic horror novel *I Am Legend*. After *Night of the Living Dead*, you no longer see zombies presented as mindless slaves of a sinister foe, but as a mass of undead corpses—which have been reanimated for one reason or another—overwhelming the living in their numbers.

*Night of the Living Dead* was released in the midst of a period of political radicalization in the US and this is reflected in the film. It was released just a month before the extremely polarized 1968 presidential election and the establishment of the MPAA's rating system—allowing millions of young teens throughout the country to see a horror film that was shocking in its realism.

The film caused an outrage over its graphic content, while the Vietnam War, and all its associated gore, continued to rage on television sets throughout the country. In *Night*, the fight between living and undead is less important than the infighting among the living while they fend off the zombies besieging the farmhouse they've taken refuge in.

Ben, the composed protagonist, deals with a hysterical bunch, including the patriarchal and individualistic Harry Cooper, who seems to represent the narrow-minded conservatism that was conditioned by two decades of the postwar boom. It is likely not an accident that Ben was cast as a black man—the film was

released only months after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., and its dramatic ending seems to nod at this.

Romero returned in 1978 with *Dawn of the Dead*, a biting criticism of consumer culture. Like all art, the film didn't exist in a bubble. The 1973–75 recession marked the end of the postwar boom. The major capitalist powers, facing a crisis of overproduction, began a process of deindustrialization, offshoring, and relocation of manufacturing in order to squeeze out more profits from cheaper labor. This further intensified the role of services and consumer goods in the economies of the United States and other advanced capitalist countries. This transformation coincided with an unprecedented shift towards finance capital and speculation.

The late 1970s in the United States saw major industrial centers left to rust. It was the beginning of the dismantling of the massive auto industry in Michigan, the textile industries in cities like New York, manufacturing in Philadelphia, and the steel industry in Pittsburgh—the latter two being settings for *Dawn of the Dead*. The continued growth of capitalism was based on a massive expansion of credit—an almost “undead” growth of the system. This was the time Americans were introduced to the modern shopping mall and when credit cards became more widely available. This was also the beginning of the first wave of slasher horror films, perhaps reflecting a subconscious understanding that beyond the artificially propped up prosperity lay a menacing foe threatening to bring it all to an unpleasant end.

*Dawn* is packed with many satirical jabs at consumer culture, including one particularly memorable scene in which



the mall's PA system announces that "If your purchase is in the next half hour in the amount of 5 dollars or more, we'll give you a bag of hard candies free"—all while we see footage of hordes of zombies mindlessly shuffling throughout the mall—a scene we are not entirely unfamiliar with today. One character explains the zombies' reason for being drawn to the mall as "Some kind of instinct. Memory of what they used to do. This was an important place in their lives."

Later, George Romero took on militarism and imperialism in 1985's *Day of the Dead*, this time set in a bunker in the Florida Everglades. Released just 2 years after Reagan's invasion of Grenada, in the midst of a decade of US imperialist involvement in Central America, the film depicts military bureaucracy, arrogance, and anti-intellectualism. The film focuses on conflicts between scientists, who are looking for a way to reverse the zombification process, and incompetent, brutish, and insolent military men.

This film, like *Dawn of the Dead*, once again shows us that we are not unlike the zombies. Head scientist, Dr. Logan, has managed to train one of their captured zombies, Bub, into docility. Bub seems to respond emotionally to music, physical human contact, and the aggressive behavior of Captain Henry Rhodes. Later on, seeking revenge for the murder of Dr. Logan, Bub manages to use a handgun to kill Captain Rhodes.

The consciousness of the zombies was brought to a higher level in 2005 when George Romero returned after decades with *Land of the Dead*. It is George Romero's most class-conscious film. In it we see a society among the living that is defined primarily by disparity between the classes. While the rich live in luxury, in a high-rise complex, the poor live on the streets, in abject poverty. In order to make raids for supplies and commodities in the surrounding areas, the crew of *Dead Reckoning*, an armored vehicle designed for these raids, shoot fireworks into the sky to distract the zombies. Back home among the living we see zombie gladiator matches, gambling, prostitution, drugs, alcohol, and other cheap thrills being utilized for the same purpose of distraction on the poor masses and as a playground for the rich.

It is observed early on in the film that the zombies have begun to mimic their past, particularly their occupations. One character notes that "They're pretending to be alive." To which the film's main protagonist, Riley, responds, "Isn't that what we're doing? Pretending to be alive?" Apparently coming to a conscious real-

ization, one particular zombie, a former gas station attendant, leads a growing number of zombies on a march to the living city where there is also a growing underground movement among the living against the inequities that exist.

Many other films have continued what Romero started. 2002's *28 Days Later*, directed by Danny Boyle and written by Alex Garland, neither of whom are strangers to social commentary, helped relaunch the current resurgence of such films. The film's apocalyptic setting is caused by an outbreak of a man-made infection. Released a year after the events of September 11, 2001, the film's subtext is declared from the very beginning with a montage of footage of riots, protests, police brutality, and other violent scenes.

A character in *28 Days Later* describes the new state of affairs: "This is what I've seen in the four weeks since infection. People killing people. Which is much what I saw in the four weeks before infection, and the four weeks before that, and before that, and as far back as I care to remember. People killing people. Which to my mind, puts us in a state of normality right now." Today's capitalist society is one of war, crumbling infrastructure, hunger, social strife, lack of resources, and disease; it is no wonder that there is such a fascination of apocalyptic themes.

A *Reuters* poll pointed out that in 2012 one in seven people worldwide believe that the end of the world is near. The highest numbers reported came from Russia and Poland, where the collapse of Stalinism is still being felt. The USSR at least guaranteed everyone a job and a place to live, with free access to health care and education. And the latest numbers reveal that sixty percent of Russians today view life in the USSR more favorably than Russia after the restoration of capitalism.

The crisis of capitalism has added fuel to this fire—twenty-two percent of Americans truly believed the world was going to end in 2012.

As those that create it are living and breathing in the real world, art does not exist in a vacuum; rather, it is in many ways a reflection of the world we are living in. Culture must speak to us on some level and must say something about about the times we are living in, if it is going to resonate in society. Art and culture are influenced by the forces all around us, social, political, and economic.

Zombie and other apocalyptic films also speak volumes about the alienation of the individual from the rest of society and from our very selves. Despite social media, which should give us more connections, it only facilitates a further atomization from each other.

The slaves in Haiti developed a folklore of zombies to reflect the horrors of their life in bondage, at the mercy of ruthless and abusive slaveowners, a life that alienated every aspect of their lives from them. But the story didn't end there. In the 1790s, a heroic revolution rocked Haiti, when the slaves rose up and took their lives into their own hands, overthrowing their masters and the rotten slave system. Today in the USA, big events are on the horizon—revolutionary events in which ordinary men and women will take their lives into their own hands. We already see such inspiring events around the world. The fight for socialism is the fight of the future against the dark and bleak conditions of capitalist wage slavery and exploitation that exist today. Through this fight we will stand tall, like our revolutionary forerunners in Haiti, and earn our position as fully realized, living human beings. ♦

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# Marxist Economics: What is Value?

ROB SEWELL

**W**hat is value? This question has perplexed the human mind for more than 2,000 years. The classical bourgeois economists grappled with the question, as did Marx. After much deliberation, they correctly hit upon the idea that labor was the source of value. This, then, became a cornerstone of bourgeois political economy, beginning with Adam Smith. On this question, there was common ground between Marx and the classical bourgeois economists.

However, for the bourgeois economists it nevertheless presented a paradox and a blind alley. "The man who found the way out of this blind alley was Karl Marx," explained Friedrich Engels. For Marx, who went on to further develop and elaborate the theory of value, it was the means to discovering of the laws of motion of capitalism and the discovery of surplus value. For this reason, the theory of value has become the principal target for all opponents of Marx. "The stock-in-trade of most anti-Marxian writers is the exposition of the absurdities of this doctrine," stated A.D. Lindsay, the former Master of Balliol College, Oxford, in 1931.

## What is the source of wealth?

The idea that all wealth is created by human labor is certainly not a new idea. It can be traced to the Middle Ages in John Ball's sermon, and was a central idea among the communist sects in the English Civil War. "But rich men receive all they have from the laborer's hand, and what they give, they give away other men's labors, not their own; therefore they are not righteous actors in the earth," stated the Diggers' leader Gerrard Winstanley in 1652. The leader of the London Jacobins, John Thelwall, proclaimed, "Property is nothing but human labor." And Benjamin Franklin, the American renaissance man, wrote that, "Trade in general being nothing else but the exchange of labor for labor, the value of all things is justly measured by labor."

One may add that labor is not the only source of material wealth, of the use-values produced by labor. The proceeds of nature, which we receive as a free gift, also contribute to this wealth. As William Petty correctly observed, labor is the father of wealth and the earth its mother.

Today, the labor theory of value has become distinctly heretical in bourgeois circles, not least because of its revolutionary implications. Initially, the labor

theory of value was a very useful weapon to the bourgeoisie, when, as a progressive class, they used it to strike blows against the politically powerful landowning class. Once the battle was won, however, the bourgeoisie no longer had use for this theory. In fact, for the bourgeois, it had subversive connotations which had to be discredited. "That labor is the sole source of wealth," wrote John Cazenove in 1812, "seems to be a doctrine as dangerous as it is false, as it unhappily affords a handle to those who would represent all property as belonging to the working classes, and the share which is received by others as a robbery or fraud upon them."

## Labor theory of value

The theory of value is straightforward enough. Human beings can only live and satisfy their basic needs through labor. Of course, this can take the form of an exploiting class living off the labor of others.

"Every child knows that any nation that stopped working, not for a year, but let us say, just for a few weeks, would perish," stated Marx. Broadly speaking, things have to be produced in certain quantities and then distributed according to the needs of society. This constitutes the economic laws of all societies, including our own. "And every child knows, too, that the amounts of products corresponding to the differing amounts of needs, demand differing and quantitatively determined amounts of society's aggregate labor," continued Marx.

In order to satisfy human needs, the labor of society, no matter what the specific form of social production, whether it be primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, or socialism, has to be divided according to these basic requirements. Of course, the form by which this takes place differs from one social system to another. "Natural laws cannot be abolished at all. The only thing that can change, under historically differing conditions, is the form in which those laws assert themselves," Marx explained. Furthermore, "Labor, then, as the creator of use values, as useful labor, is a condition of human existence which is independent of all forms of society; it is an eternal natural necessity which mediates the metabolism between man and nature, and therefore human life itself."

In a non-industrialized natural economy, producers produce use values for the needs of the local community; but over time, the market becomes dominant, and those producers now produce commodi-

ties, not for use, but for exchange. Everyone therefore becomes dependent on one another due to the division of labor, i.e., because everyone needs the products produced by others. The exchange of commodities—based on an exchange of equivalents—takes place on the basis of a common quality, irrespective of the commodities' different physical properties. The common quality is that they are values.

Just as the weight of an object can only be understood in relation to another object, so the value of a commodity can only be understood when it is actually exchanged for another. For this exchange to happen there needs to be a quality existing in common within all commodities that can be compared, one to another. This is clearly not weight, color, size, or any other physical quality, which vary considerably from one commodity to another. What commodities have in common is that they are all products of human labor.

"Nature builds no machines, no locomotives, railways, electric telegraphs, self-acting mules, etc. These are products of human industry," explained Marx. As a consequence, so much generalized labor in one commodity can be compared with so much generalized labor in another. In exchange, so many watches can be traded for so many pairs of shoes, depending on the quantity of labor time involved in their production. Commodities can therefore be regarded as congealed labor time.

## Reality and appearance

For Marx, value is a relationship between persons who produce commodities, a social relationship, but it appears in a "fantastic form" as a relation between things. It is people alone, with their own interests, who engage in this process, using these inanimate objects for sale, and not the other way round. This confusion arises from what Marx calls "the fetishism of commodities." As we know, appearances can be deceptive. Each day the sun appears to circumvent the earth, when the reality is the earth travels around the sun. We therefore need to penetrate the appearance to reveal the reality that is disguised within. That is the reason for Marxist economic theory.

Again, in Marx's own words: "The vulgar economist has not the slightest idea that the actual everyday exchange relations and the value magnitudes cannot be directly identical. The point of bourgeois society is precisely that, *a priori*, no conscious social regulation of produc-





tion takes place. What is reasonable and necessary by nature asserts itself only as a blindly operating average. The vulgar economist thinks he has made a great discovery when, faced with the disclosure of the intrinsic interconnection, he insists that things look different in appearance. In fact, he prides himself in his clinging to appearances and believing them to be the ultimate. Why then have science at all?

"But there is also something else behind it. Once interconnection has been revealed, all theoretical belief in the perpetual necessity of the existing conditions collapses, even before the collapse takes place in practice. Here, therefore, it is completely in the interests of the ruling classes to perpetuate the unthinking confusion. And for what other reason are the sycophantic babblers paid who have no other scientific trump to play except that, in political economy, one may not think at all!"

Value, in the Marxist sense, appears a rather strange thing. It is neither a natural or physical quality of the commodity, nor one that can be understood through our senses. Such value cannot be seen, even with a powerful microscope. Neither can it be touched or smelled, as it has no physical presence. But exchange value certainly exists and is not an arbitrary quality. As Marx explained, value is a definite social quality and only appears when exchange takes place between commodities. It is a social quality, a relationship between the labor of the producers. The law of supply and demand simply pivots the market prices of commodities around their value.

Value is the result, however, not of a particular form of labor, but of abstract human labor, labor in general. The labor embodied in different commodities, such as shoes and coats, is different. They are the specific products of the shoemaker

and the tailor. However, in exchange, what is exchanged is not the particular labor, but human labor in general, abstract human labor. All labor, whether simple, unskilled, average labor, or skilled labor, is all reduced to quantities of average labor; skilled labor being simply a multiple of unskilled.

In the process of production, machines do not create new value, which at first sight appears to be the case. Rather, they serve simply to transfer their own value bit by bit to the new commodities, namely, through depreciation. Machines have to be put to use by workers, otherwise they are wasted. "A machine which is not active in the labor process is useless," explained Marx. "In addition, it falls prey to the destructive power of natural processes. Iron rusts; wood rots. Yarn with which we neither weave nor knit is cotton wasted. Living labor must seize on these things, awaken them from the dead, change them from merely possible into real and effective use values."

Marx went on to answer the common objection about a lazy worker who appears to produce greater values, having spent more time in producing them. Marx explained that it was not merely labor that created value, but "socially necessary" labor, a distinction the classical economists failed to grasp. By this is meant the average labor used to produce goods under average conditions and under the existing level of technique. Whether a commodity contains socially necessary labor or not will be revealed in exchange as commodities are sold or rejected on the market. If it takes longer to produce a certain commodity than the average time, then this excessive labor time is useless labor. Market competition will force down prices to the costs of the social average. All those commodities made at

a higher cost will remain unsold or have to be sold below their cost of production. Production costs are ultimately reduced to labor costs. The ebb and flow of price levels settles around an axis which covers production cost and a certain rate of profit. Our capitalist employing unproductive labor will soon find himself driven out of business, unable to sell his goods at the "going rate."

If capitalists are able to produce commodities at below the going rate, by lowering the cost of production, then they will be able to sell more goods more cheaply and make superprofits—until everyone else follows suit and introduces the new technique. Once this happens, the price falls to a new level to correspond with the new "socially necessary" labor time. Each commodity now takes less time to produce and therefore contains less value than before, thereby effectively reducing the cost and the price. The socially-necessary labor time, of course, changes with different times and places, but there is a general average standard at any given time. Through this process is determined the ratio of commodities necessary for society, and the distribution of labor power to the various sectors of the economy. This shows how the law of value acts as the basic regulator of the capitalist system.

The need to constantly keep up with "socially necessary" labor time also explains why capitalism cannot exist without continually revolutionizing the mode of production and increasing exploitation. The introduction of machinery, together with an expansion of capital, means an inevitable tendency towards the concentration and centralization of capital and the rise of monopolies.

The arguments of the apologists of capitalism have become increasingly discredited. The reformists, who also attempt to ridicule the labor theory of value, have long ago capitulated to capitalism and act as its open apologists. But their ideas are out of step with today's reality, as living standards collapse in an age of austerity. The crisis of capitalism means the crisis of reformism, as well as bourgeois economics, on which they base themselves. The crisis, which has assumed a protracted, insoluble character, forces the working class to look for a way out of this mess and gravitate towards those who can offer a coherent explanation.

Only Marxism can offer this alternative, based upon a scientific view of the world, as well as the solution in the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. In the final analysis, this is the reason why Marxism is in a continual struggle against the defenders of an outmoded system and ideology. ♦



# The Struggle Against Women's Oppression

RACHEL GIBBS AND CLAIRE MARTIN

It is often said that sexism is a phenomenon of the past—there are more women in the work force than ever before and many other gains have been made in recent decades. Yet the pay gap between men and women in the US remains around 20%, and women are still expected to carry out the majority of domestic duties such as cleaning and taking care of children.

The past century has seen many strides forward for women, as many more have entered into higher education, pursued careers, and gained the right to abortion and divorce. However, we must recognize that women remain a doubly-exploited group—as both workers and as women.

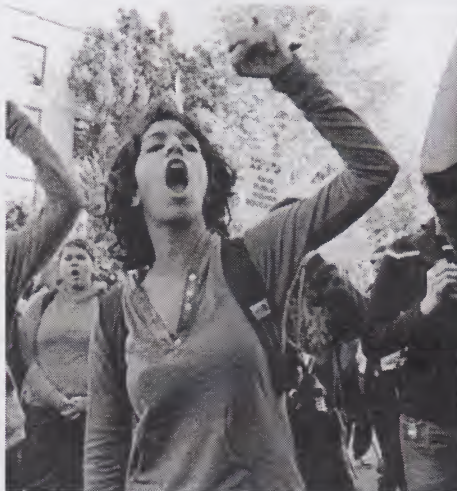
A brief look at the history of the 20th century shows that more women entered the labor market as a result of the changing needs of capitalism, and that this process played a role in the driving down of wages as the two-wage family became the norm. For many women, this has been far from an emancipating experience, as they have more often than not been forced into the more precarious sectors of the economy, while being paid even less than their male counterparts.

Despite the modernization of relationships and attitudes towards sex, this has far from ended oppression of women in this realm; it has simply changed the form. New social expectations mean that instead of women being pigeon-holed as “wife” and “mother,” they are now expected to exhibit sexual behavior or else be labelled a “prude”—but not too much—or else a woman risks being labelled a “slut.”

Increasingly strong sexual imagery and sexual expectations have led to the rise of a culture in which women are seen as sexual objects, and sexual violence—including rape—is seen as a joke.

The question of the origin of women's oppression is one which is rarely tackled seriously. It is therefore of the utmost importance that we understand where this oppression comes from, as on this basis, the link between class society and the oppression of women becomes clear.

Women's oppression is one of many forms of oppression—including racism, homophobia, and more—which arises from a society based upon the class exploitation of the many for the profits of the few. With this understanding we can also develop ideas on how to fight women's oppression. Clearly, this involves fighting for every reform and basic demo-



cratic right, but even that is not enough.

As explained in Friedrich Engels' masterpiece, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, the oppression and degradation of women has not always been present throughout human history.

The earliest form of human society is referred to by Marxists as “primitive communism,” as the low technological level meant that people had to work together in order to meet their basic needs, and there was no significant surplus produced from which to profit off the labor of others. During this stage, which lasted hundreds of thousands of years, the work of men and women was divided according to gender. For biological reasons, such as the need to breast feed and carry the baby to term during pregnancy, women played the primary role in the collective raising of children, and hence, their role in food production was based mainly around gathering close to the home, while the males often hunted further afield.

Women were not viewed as inferior to men and their status was aided by the fact that families were traced through the mother line, since without marriage as a social norm it was impossible to be certain of a child's father.

The Neolithic (“New Stone Age”) revolution brought with it higher quality stone tools and the domestication of animals, which, for the first time in human history, allowed for not only basic needs to be met, but also for the creation of a surplus. The creation of a surplus led to the early beginnings of class society, as it was now possible for some in the community to accumulate more than their neighbors, eventually leading to distinctions between rich and poor. As some began to amass more and more wealth, they

forced others to work for them, leading eventually to the rise of classes and the state.

This process led to women being seen as inferior to men in society, as it was by the work of men that the majority of the movable and transferable wealth was now created. The creation of a surplus also led to the traditions and laws of inheritance. The greater status and wealth of men meant that families were now traced through the male line, which necessitated the enforcement of female monogamy. Here we see the origins of marriage.

Female oppression began in the embryo of class society, and as it developed into the system of capitalism, the oppression of women became more complex and ingrained.

With socialism will come the end of all of the many forms of oppression used by the capitalist system, including those faced by women. This will all be achieved through the guarantee of work for all, alongside a general reduction in working hours, giving each worker more free time to spend as he or she chooses, including time to care for families.

As childcare would be socialized, women would not have to choose between having children and working. No worker would have to face any form of discrimination or oppression based on his or her gender, sexuality, or marital status. This, along with equal generous maternity and paternity leave, and an education system emphasizing equality (including gender equality), would aid in fighting against sexist attitudes in society.

We cannot simply wash away the institutionalized oppression through gender quotas in the boardroom or “real beauty” campaigns by cosmetics giants. We can't expect the capitalist powers-that-be to fight in the interests of women; it is only through a socialist economic system that we can lay the basis for full and genuine equality.

Violence against women, harmful societal attitudes, denial of access to education, and many other forms of discrimination must be fought against, and the labor movement must be at the forefront of this struggle.

As we have demonstrated, capitalism, exploitation, and oppression are intricately linked. All forms of discrimination derive ultimately from class oppression. Therefore, in order to seriously tackle any one of these forms of oppression, we must also fight against capitalism. ♦



# Ted Grant on the Imperialist Bullying of Iraq

*These lines from 1998 are among Ted Grant's final writings. In light of the eventual invasion of Iraq in 2003, these excerpts from the article "Imperialist Bullying and the Crisis in the Middle East" are particularly prescient and relevant.*

**T**he threat of a renewed bombing campaign against Iraq by US imperialism and its British stooges has added a new and explosive element into the world situation. Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, for a period of almost half a century world relations were characterized by a relative stability, punctuated by occasional military conflicts (Korea, Vietnam). Now, however, the whole situation has been transformed. Even before the advent of a new world recession, the general situation is characterized by extreme turbulence and instability—economic, financial, social, political, and military. The collapse of Stalinism has meant that US imperialism has acquired complete dominance. Rarely has the world seen such a concentration of economic and military power in the hands of one country.

It is true that Saddam Hussein is a dictator, a monster and an enemy of the Iraqi people. All socialists are implacably opposed to the Iraqi regime. But the task of settling accounts with Saddam Hussein is the task of the Iraqi workers and peasants themselves. It cannot be entrusted to the tender mercies of the imperialists who, let us not forget, backed and armed Saddam Hussein for decades and only broke with him because he refused to be an obedient stooge.

The stinking hypocrisy of these so-called "democrats" can easily be exposed by the fact that they continue to back and arm other reactionary and dictatorial regimes in the Middle East without batting an eyelid. Turkey oppresses and massacres the Kurds (and has just taken advantage of the situation to launch a new attack on the Kurds inside Iraq, with no condemnation from London and Washington). Saudi Arabia is a reactionary feudal dictatorship. Israel mercilessly oppresses the Palestinians. But all this is fine—as long as they uphold American interests.

At this time of writing, it is still not entirely clear whether the American and British threats will be carried into practice, or whether Saddam, as so often in the past, will go to the brink only to draw back at the eleventh hour. This is not ruled out. But war has a logic of its own and can overrule the best laid plans of di-

plomacy. Once the order to mobilize has been made, it is difficult to put the machinery into reverse without massive loss of face. Prestige in international politics can often become a material force.

The essential war aim of US (and to some extent even British) imperialism is precisely to demonstrate their military power. To be seen to back down in the face of Baghdad's diplomatic maneuvering would defeat the whole purpose of the enterprise. Things have gone too far for that. That is why neither the to-ing and fro-ing of French and Russian diplomats have had the slightest effect—much less the plaintive wailing of the pacifists, no matter how well-intentioned. No. Here the serious questions are solved by serious (that is, military) means. But this has always been the case throughout history, as any well-informed person knows. One can regret it, but it is a fact nonetheless.

The only way that the bombing can be averted under present circumstances is a complete capitulation by Baghdad. Saddam would have to accept each and every condition demanded of him. This he may do to avoid what is obviously intended to be a terrible punishment. Or he may not. It is impossible to predict. But in any case, the present crisis has important lessons for socialists and workers everywhere.

When decisive questions are posed,

only the Marxists can offer a firm and principled class position. Every other tendency fails the test. The present case is no exception. Above all it is necessary to nail the lie that the present maneuvers of Anglo-American imperialism can serve the interests of the Iraqi people, democracy, peace, or any progressive aim whatever.

The very idea that the men who have murdered 100,000 people in bombing attacks and are responsible for the deaths of over one million children through an inhuman and indiscriminate blockade, could in some way play a progressive role in Iraq, is an abomination and a lie. All genuine socialists must implacably oppose the aggressions of imperialism (both military and economic) against the Iraqi people. We must support each and every effort to build an independent working class and socialist opposition inside Iraq, pledged to overthrow the bloody Saddam dictatorship and replace it with a genuine workers' democracy.

A socialist Iraq would be a beacon to the oppressed peoples of all the Middle East. It could be the basis for the establishment of a Socialist Federation of the Middle East—the only way in which we can put an end to the horrors of wars, ethnic and religious conflicts, and create the basis for a harmonious and progressive future for all the peoples. ♦





# Trotsky on the Unions and the Need for a Labor Party

*We republish excerpts from an extremely interesting and insightful discussion between Leon Trotsky and CIO trade union leader, Abraham Plotkin, Midwest representative of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), held at Trotsky's home in Mexico in 1938. While much has changed since this exchange took place (for example, the threat of fascism in the US is not at all imminent at present), Trotsky's insights on the nature of the labor bureaucracy, the tasks confronting the labor movement, and the need for a labor party are as relevant today as they were in the stormy years before World War II.*

**CIO Official:** Unfortunately, the past history of the United States with its unlimited opportunities, its individualism, has not taught our workers to think socially. It's enough to tell you that at best 15 percent of the organized workers come to union meetings. That's something to think about.

**Trotsky:** But perhaps the reason for the absenteeism of 85 percent is that the speakers have nothing to say to the ranks?

**CIO Official:** Hmm. That's true to a certain extent. The economic situation is such that we are forced to hold back the workers, to put brakes on the movement, to retreat. This is not to the workers' liking, of course.

**Trotsky:** Here we have the heart of the matter. It is not the ranks who are to blame but the leaders. In the classical epoch of capitalism the trade unions also got into difficult situations during crises and were forced to retreat, lost part of their membership, spent their reserve funds. But then there was at least the assurance that the next upturn would allow the losses to be made up, and more besides. Today there isn't the slightest hope for such a thing. The unions will go down step by step. Your organization, the CIO, may collapse as quickly as it arose.

**CIO Official:** What can be done?

**Trotsky:** Above all, one must tell the masses what's what. It's inadmissible to play hide-and-seek. You, of course, know the American workers better than I. Nevertheless, let me assure you that you are looking at them through old eyeglasses. The masses are immeasurably better, more daring and resolute than the leaders. The very fact of the rapid rise of the CIO shows that the American worker has changed radically under the impact of the terrible economic jolts of the postwar pe-

riod, especially of the past decade. When you showed a little initiative in building more combative unions, the workers immediately responded and gave you extraordinary, unprecedented support. You have no right to complain about the masses...

... The workers don't come to your meetings because they instinctively feel the insufficiency, the lack of substance, the lifelessness, the outright falsity of your program. The trade union leaders give out platitudes at the very moment when every worker senses catastrophe overhead. One must find the language that corresponds to the real conditions of decaying capitalism and not to bureaucratic illusions.

**CIO Official:** I have already said that I see no leaders. There are separate groups, sects, but I see no one who could unite the worker masses, even if I agree with you that the masses are ready for struggle.

**Trotsky:** The problem is not leaders, but program. The correct program not only arouses and consolidates the masses, but also trains the leaders.

**CIO Official:** What do you consider a correct program?

**Trotsky:** You know that I am a Marxist; more precisely, a Bolshevik.

My program has a very short and simple name: *socialist revolution*. But I don't ask that the leaders of the union movement immediately adopt the program of the Fourth International. What I do ask is that they draw conclusions from their work, from their own situation; that for themselves and for the masses they answer just these two questions: 1) How to save the CIO from bankruptcy and destruction? 2) How to save the United States from fascism?

**CIO Official:** What would you yourself do in the United States today if you were a trade union organizer?

**Trotsky:** First of all, the trade unions should stand the question of unemployment and wages on its head. The sliding scale of hours, such as you have, is correct: everyone should have work. But the sliding scale of hours should be supplemented by a sliding scale of wages. The working class cannot permit a continuous lowering of its living standards, for this would be equivalent to the destruction of human culture. The highest weekly pay rates on the eve of the 1929 crisis must be taken as a point of departure.

The mighty productive forces created by the workers have not disappeared nor



been destroyed; they are at hand. Those who own and control these productive forces are responsible for unemployment. The workers know how to work and want to work. The work should be divided up among all the workers. The weekly pay for each worker should be no less than the maximum attained in the past. Such is the natural, the necessary, the unpostponable demand of the trade unions. Otherwise they will be swept away like trash by historical developments...

... It is obvious that the sliding scale and workers' self-defense are not sufficient. These are just the first steps, necessary in order to protect the workers from death by starvation or the fascists' knives. These are urgent and necessary means of self-defense. But by themselves they will not resolve the problem. The basic task consists in laying the foundation for a better economic system, for a more just, rational, and decent utilization of the productive forces in the interests of all the people.

This can't be attained by the ordinary, "normal," routine methods of the trade unions. You cannot disagree with this, for in the conditions of capitalist decline isolated unions turn out to be incapable of halting even the further deterioration of the workers' conditions. More decisive and deep-going methods are necessary. The bourgeoisie, who hold sway over the means of production and who have state power, have brought the economy to a state of total and hopeless disarray. It is necessary to declare the bourgeoisie incompetent and to transfer the economy into fresh and honest hands, that is, into the hands of the workers themselves.

How to do this? The first step is clear: all the trade unions should unite and form their own *labor party*. Not the party of Roosevelt or La Guardia, not a "labor" party in name only, but a truly independent political organization of the working class. Only such a party is capable of gathering around itself the ruined farmers, the small artisans, the shopkeepers.



But for this it would have to wage an uncompromising struggle against the banks, trusts, monopolies, and their political agents, that is, the Republican and Democratic parties. The task of the labor party should consist in taking power into its own hands, all the power, and then putting the economy in order. This means organizing the entire national economy according to a single national plan whose aim is not the profit of a small bunch of exploiters but the material and spiritual interests of a population of 130 million.

**CIO Official:** Many of our activists are beginning to understand that the course of political development is moving toward a labor party. But Roosevelt's popularity is still too great. If he agrees to run for president a third time, the question of a labor party will have to be postponed another four years.

**Trotsky:** There precisely is the tragedy resulting from the fact that Messrs. Leaders look to those above them instead of those below. The coming war, the decay of American capitalism, the growth of unemployment and poverty, all these basic processes, which directly determine the fate of dozens and hundreds of millions of people, do not depend on the candidacy or "popularity" of Roosevelt. I assure you that he is far more popular among the well-paid CIO officials than among the unemployed. Incidentally, the trade unions exist for the workers, not the officials.

The idea of the CIO inspired millions of workers for a certain period, the idea of an independent, militant labor party that aims to put an end to economic anarchy, unemployment, and misery, to save the people and its culture, the idea of such a party is capable of inspiring tens of millions. Of course the agitators of the labor party would immediately have to show the masses, by word and deed, that they are not electoral agents of Roosevelt, La Guardia, and company, but true fighters for the interests of the exploited masses.

When the speakers talk in the language of workers' leaders and not of White House agents, then 85 percent of the members will come to meetings, while the 15 percent of conservative oldsters, worker-aristocrats, and careerists will stay away.

The masses are better, more daring, more resolute than the leaders. The masses wish to struggle. Putting the brakes on the struggle are the leaders, who have lagged behind the masses. Their own indecisiveness, their own conservatism, their own bourgeois prejudices are disguised by the leaders with allusions to the backwardness of the masses. Such is the true state of affairs at present. ♦

## Fighting Fund Financial Appeal

**R**ed October and November have been busy months for the IMT in the Northeast. In NYC, Alan Woods and Alex Grant spoke at a one-day Marxist school on October 26. The room was packed with more than 50 people from across the region, including Canada.

Alan spoke on Stalin, and showed how Stalinism has nothing in common with Marxism. Stalin, the ultimate empiricist, was the personification of the Soviet bureaucracy that existed in the USSR due to the isolation of the revolution. Alan also announced that the IMT would be publishing Trotsky's unfinished masterpiece, *Stalin*, sometime in 2014, including new, never-before published material from the Trotsky archives at Harvard.

Alex Grant from *Fightback/La Riposte* in Canada discussed the National Question, a vitally important issue in Canada and around the world. Alex explained how Marxists are against national oppression and in favor of a voluntary socialist federation of nations built by the working class, where all languages and cultures are free to develop without any kind of coercion. The day school, including airfare from London for Alan, cost quite a lot of money to organize. However, the enthusiasm resulting from the discussions brought in donations that virtually covered all the costs! Why not consider making a donation to help us make these events a regular occurrence?

In Madison, a Marxist day school was held on November 2. The comrades discussed many issues including the crisis of capitalism and the need for socialism, organizing workers and Marxist economics.

In Pittsburgh, the Northeast Regional Marxist School was held the weekend of November 9 and 10. About 25 people attended. We discussed the ideas of Ted Grant, Proletarian Bonapartism, the work of the IMT worldwide, the early CP in the USA, the Paris Commune of 1871, and how to sell the *Socialist Appeal*.

But these are not the only places where the IMT is hosting events. Coming up on the weekend of December 7 & 8, the first IMT Marxist School will be held in Northern California. This will be a weekend discussing theory, history and how to build the forces of Marxism in the largest state in the country. That same weekend, a Marxist day school is being organized in St. Louis, MO.

All of these events showed the growth of the IMT in the US and the high morale of the comrades. The year is nearing an end. So far we have collected more

than \$9,800 and have pledges for another \$3,500 more. Our target is to raise a total of \$15,050 for the whole of 2013. Time is running out! Please help us break through the target. Support our outreach to students and help recruit a new generation of Marxists, so we can win the coming battles. Your \$100, \$50, \$20 and \$10 can help build the forces of Marxism here and throughout the world. Let's hold holiday fundraisers to both have a good time and help us make the target. We have a world to win and with your help, we can make it happen! ♦

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# Musicians vs. Capitalism (Part 2)

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*Read part one at [socialistappeal.org](http://socialistappeal.org)*

In September 2012, Jeremy Gilbert, Professor of Cultural and Political Theory at the University of East London, stated in an OurKingdom article that:

"Under such circumstances, we see a very dramatic change in the relationships of capital to musical creativity. On the one hand, the most influential sections of capital no longer have much interest in maintaining anti-market monopoly control over musical content: while the residual music industry may still rely on its Justin Biebers to generate profit, Apple really doesn't care if you're downloading Bieber or the Beatles or Ash Ra Tempel (although of course it will fight to the death to maintain its monopolies at the levels that it cares about, as Samsung were reminded just last week, when a Californian court effectively ruled that Apple own the rights to rounded rectangles).

"On the other hand, there isn't much need for capital to invest heavily in creative infrastructure of any kind, with so many musicians out there willing to buy their hardware for themselves and a huge community of listeners willing to research and select the most popular acts for themselves. And there's very little need for them to pay musicians much at all, with so much back catalogue to exploit, and so much music available for free.

"In fact, what we see happening to musicians under these circumstances is rather terrible. In the UK, in recent years, the conventional wisdom has been that although there was now clearly no money to be made from selling recorded music, audiences were still willing to pay a premium for live performances, which would now become the main source of income for musicians.

"The apparently exponential growth in demand for live music led to an explosion in the number of summer music festivals on offer to the public, and this boom seemed to be escaping even the worst effects of the post-2008 recession... until last year. In 2011 the bubble burst, and Music Week—the house publication of the UK music industry—reported a very interesting statistic: no large music festival that summer had made a profit in excess of the corporate sponsorship which it had received."

While the issue of live music is another topic altogether, many fear that there is absolutely no viable way out of the current scenario for music recording and publishing. Some have argued for buying directly from the artist or from outlets like CDBaby, where the artist pockets a higher percentage of the proceeds.

However, this situation is shortsighted for two reasons: 1) It still leaves open the door to exploitation of musicians at the hands of distribution channels (albeit "kinder, gentler" ones); and 2) For those artists who are already on the Bataan Death March as all-in-one promoters, marketers, merchandise sellers, designers, etc., this provides no real solution.

Gilbert is correct when he states in the same article that, "Once international broadband speeds reach the point where distribution of high-quality 24-bit wav files is as easy as distribution of Mpegs already is, then [other distribution schemes] will largely disappear altogether... Under such circumstances, we may have to think much more radically about what kind of remunerative models will make it possible for us to have a music culture."

As Niklas Albin Svensson of marxist.com explained, there is no way out as long as we live under a profit-driven market model:

"The model of financing of art... is fundamentally flawed. It is not a model based on safeguarding the interests of the workers but the profits of the multinationals... The first step towards a new model must be to nationalize the media industry, under workers' control. This would enable us to use the profits that are still made to invest in culture, both the quality and the conditions of the workers. The state should guarantee a decent wage and working conditions for all artists and

other workers in the sector...

"Gradually, the whole industry must be geared towards providing arts and culture for free, funded instead by society as a whole. As part of a socialist society, we would thus free the industry from the shackles imposed on it by profit making. Yet we would also make culture and information accessible to everyone."

Of course, we do not promise to be able to predict every aspect of how such a model would function—we are not utopians. But there is no justified reason to doubt its viability, and its prospects are extremely promising. As Leon Trotsky wrote in 1924:

"It is difficult to predict the extent of self-government which the man of the future may reach or the heights to which he may carry his technique. Social construction and psycho-physical self-education will become two aspects of one and the same process. All the arts—literature, drama, painting, music and architecture will lend this process beautiful form. More correctly, the shell in which the cultural construction and self-education of Communist man will be enclosed, will develop all the vital elements of contemporary art to the highest point.

"Man will become immeasurably stronger, wiser and subtler; his body will become more harmonized, his movements more rhythmic, his voice more musical. The forms of life will become dynamically dramatic. The average human type will rise to the heights of an Aristotle, a Goethe, or a Marx. And above this ridge new peaks will rise."

No to the commodification of art and the corporate stranglehold on creativity!

Bring the major recording and media production and distribution infrastructure under public ownership, to be run under democratic workers' control! ♦





# OUR PROGRAM: WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

**FOR A MASS PARTY OF LABOR BASED ON THE UNIONS—BREAK WITH THE DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS:** Only organized labor has the numbers and resources to effectively challenge the bosses' parties. For a militant, class independent, socialist program to fight against the attacks of big business. By fighting for the working class majority at the polls, in the workplace, and on the streets, such a party could quickly become a mass force and turn American politics upside down.

**THE RIGHT TO STRIKE, UNION REPRESENTATION, AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING FOR ALL WORKERS:** Repeal all antiunion laws including Taft-Hartley. End compulsory arbitration and the victimization of trade unionists and those forming new unions. Organize the unorganized. Mobilize the rank and file and unite the labor movement to fight back against the bosses. No to concessions! For trade union democracy. All union officials to be regularly elected with the right of immediate recall by the membership. All officials to receive no more than the average wage of a skilled worker.

**FULL EMPLOYMENT:** No to layoffs. Thirty hours work for forty hours pay. The right to a secure, full-time job, full benefits, or a place in education. Job security for all temporary workers and interns with equal pay and treatment. For a massive program of useful public works to create quality union jobs to rebuild our infrastructure. For a national minimum wage of at least \$16 per hour. Wages to be tied to inflation through periodic Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA). For union control over hiring and firing. Establish union-controlled job training and hiring halls in communities with high unemployment. Voluntary retirement at age 55 with full benefits. No to the privatization of Social Security.

**SAFE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR ALL:** End homelessness. For an immediate moratorium on evictions. For the nationalization of foreclosed and vacant homes, to be allocated to those in need under democratic workers' and community control, with residents of foreclosed properties allowed to

stay in their homes. No compensation to the foreclosing owners, except in cases of proven need. Rent for all housing, including Section 8 and government-owned housing, to be fixed at not more than 10 percent of wages, as part of a voluntary, national plan for housing.

**UNIVERSAL QUALITY HEALTH CARE:** For a socialized, national health care system. Free scientific research from the profit motive. Full access for all to the latest medical technology, treatments, and discoveries. Massively fund research for cures and treatment of AIDS, cancer, and other diseases. Nationalize the health insurance companies, the medical equipment and pharmaceutical industries, the mega-hospital systems and related clinics, and integrate them into a single state-owned and democratically managed and administered health provider.

**QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL:** Fully fund and expand our public schools, colleges, and universities. End corporate encroachment into the classroom. No to means testing, vouchers, charter schools, and privatization. No to "Race to the Top" and "No Child Left Behind." Abolish tuition fees and forgive student loans. Provide living grants and paid internships to all students. Nationalize the private universities and colleges and merge them into one united public system of higher education. For lifelong learning for all from the cradle to the grave.

**OUTLAW ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION—EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL:** Equal pay for work of equal value. Full paid leave for expectant mothers after the 1st trimester; parental leave with full pay for up to two years after birth or adoption. Free and safe, quality after-school programs and childcare facilities in the workplace. Affordable public laundry services and subsidized restaurants serving healthy, quality food to help free working women from domestic servitude. Full reproductive rights up to and including abortion. No to discrimination on the basis of sexual preference, gender identity, and expression. Defend our civil liberties from attacks in the name of the "war on terror." For

genuine freedom of expression. Nationalize the means of communication, and democratize access to the media and the use of public meeting spaces on the basis of proportional representation.

**NO TO RACISM, PROFILING, AND POLICE BRUTALITY:** No to racist and antiworker police, courts, and laws. End the phony war on drugs in the U.S. and internationally. Abolish the death penalty and release all political prisoners. For the immediate and unconditional legalization of all undocumented immigrants. Full rights and amnesty for immigrant workers and their families. End all racist immigration and asylum controls. For the right of residency and dual citizenship. For the right to speak one's own language. Access to Social Security with equal benefits for all. No to "guest worker" programs. For family reunification and an immediate end to raids and deportations. No to border walls, militarization, and repression on the border. For the unity of the working class: mobilize the labor movement to combat racism and discrimination and to improve conditions for all workers.

**A SOCIALIZED PLAN OF PRODUCTION FOR AGRICULTURE:** Nationalize the food distribution and agrichemical giants that destroy farmers' livelihoods and endanger public health in the pursuit of profit. A democratic plan of food production would protect small farmers' and agricultural workers' jobs and security. Fully fund nutrition assistance and extension programs. Full union rights for all agricultural workers.

**ACTION TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT AND JOBS:** For public ownership and control over natural resources—the land, major industries, mining and logging companies, transport, oil, gas, and other energy—to ensure a safe and healthy environment for all. Environmental plans would be measured in generations, not fiscal quarters. Free and efficient public transportation for all.

**NATIONALIZE THE KEY LEVERS OF THE ECONOMY: THE MAJOR INDUSTRIES, BANKS, AND CORPORATIONS:** No to austerity—make the rich pay for the crisis! Break with the irrational chaos of the capitalist free market. Nationalize the Fortune 500. No compensation to the millionaires, only to those in genuine

need. All nationalized companies to be run under democratic workers' control and management, and integrated into a socialist plan of production to meet the needs of society. Consolidate the nationalized banks into a single, publicly owned and administered national bank to protect workers' savings and guarantee affordable loans to all.

**SOCIALIST INTERNATIONALISM:** End NAFTA, CAFTA, and pull out of the WTO and other bankers' deals that are the tools of imperialist exploitation. No to the FTAA and the TPP. Abolish the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, and write off the debts imposed by Wall Street and imperialism. For international economic cooperation based on the interests of working people, not a handful of multinationals. No to the war on working people at home and abroad. Cut the military budget and invest instead in social needs. No to militarism and intervention in the Middle East and around the world: withdraw all troops from Iraq and Afghanistan now! End the embargo on Cuba. Hands off Latin America! Unite with Canadian and Latin American workers in a socialist federation of the Americas as part of a world socialist federation.

## LEARN MORE ABOUT AND JOIN THE WIL

**T**he Workers International League bases itself on the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky, and on the further development of these ideas by the International Marxist Tendency. We fight for international socialism, in which the world working class has democratic control over the means of production, distribution, and exchange. A workers' government in the US would take over the vast wealth now owned by just a handful of individuals and democratically use it in the interests of everyone. We invite all those who are in agreement to contact us.



# SOCIALIST APPEAL

## HAUNTING INEQUALITY WORLDWIDE

Imran Kamyana and Lal Khan in Pakistan

**D**espite the international corporate media's relentless propaganda, the gap between the haves and have-nots is continuously increasing on a global scale. What we have before us is a transfer of wealth from the poorer countries to the richer on a scale never seen before in history.

The United Nations, the World Bank, and International Monetary Fund are all running around highlighting one initiative after another in a farcical manner to show they are doing their best to reduce the curse of poverty. Similarly, nonprofits have become an industry for the elimination of poverty—but they have utterly failed to achieve this, even in this advanced 21st century. They have become totally self-serving and have a direct interest in the continuation and prolongation of poverty. It is no surprise that every time working people revolt against poverty, these organizations and institutions are wheeled out to shed crocodile tears and in the process do their utmost to derail and discredit the movements through the use of the national and international corporate media.

Marx wrote in *Capital* that, “One capitalist always kills many . . . Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolize all advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined.”

No matter how hard bourgeois economists try to hide this startling state of affairs, Marx's predictions have never been as true as they are today. Out of the world's wealth, the share for Africa, India, Latin America, and China are 1%, 2%, 4%, and 8% respectively. This combined 15% wealth is shared by 4.2 billion people (60%) out of a total world population of 7 billion. On the other hand, the share of Europe and North America comes to a staggering 63%, whereas the total population in these two regions is just 1.3 billion (18.6%).

This disparity, however, is only one side of the picture. Not every person in a rich country is rich, and similarly, not every

person in a poor country is automatically poor.

Globally the US is one of the most unequal countries in terms of wealth, where the richest 1% of the population controls 35% of the wealth, while the richest 10% controls 80% of the wealth. The bottom 80% only has access to 7% of the wealth. Likewise, India is one of the poorest countries but of the 100 richest men in the world, three are from India—although their wealth is stashed away in western banks and offshore financial institutions.

An analysis of economic disparity on a global scale shows that the richest 1% in the world own 43% of the wealth, while the richest 10% of the population controls 83% of the wealth. Furthermore, the poorest 50% have access to just 2% of wealth, and the poorest 80% have access to only 6% of the world wealth. The richest 300 people in the world have more wealth than the poorest 3 billion. The richest 200 people in the world have over \$2.7 trillion in assets, whereas the poorest 3.5 billion people have access to a mere \$2.2 trillion. Over the last 20 years, the income of the top 1% of the population has increased by 60%, accelerating further since the 2008 crisis.

No country on earth is safe from the loot and plunder of the multinational corporations. Multinationals are at the forefront in transferring billions of dollars to offshore tax havens on an annual basis. To illustrate this point, General Electric, Pfizer, Microsoft, Apple, and Merck have transferred \$108 billion, \$73 billion, \$60 billion, \$54 billion, and \$53 billion respectively.

Over the course of a single year, just 60 big corporations transfer an estimated \$1.3 trillion dollars to offshore tax havens. According to one estimate, the richest people of the world have off-shored at least \$32 trillion in order to avoid taxes. This equals 8 times the total debt of third world countries, which is around \$4 trillion.

200 years ago, the rich countries were three times richer than the poor countries. By the end of the 1960s, when colonization was coming to an end, the ratio was 35-to-1. Today, the rich countries have 80 times more wealth than the poor countries, which proves that the exploitation of the developing world has increased many times over since the formal end of the colonial era. The western imperialist nations provide “aid” of around \$130 billion to poor countries annually. However, the multinational

monopolies transfer \$900 billion from the developing countries to the banks of the rich countries every year. In addition, poor countries pay \$600 billion in interest each year on their debts to rich countries and imperialist financial institutions—loans on which the principle has repaid many times over!

Policies and laws such as cuts in custom duties, cheap labor and raw materials, overpriced finished goods and technology, etc., imposed by the WTO, IMF, and World Bank, cost the developing world \$500 billion. In the last decade alone, the multinational companies have grabbed lands in various poor countries equal to the whole land area of Western Europe. The market value of this land is no less than \$2 trillion.

This all serves to underline the fact that capitalism is not the ultimate destiny of humanity. Things do not have to be this way. Only the socialist revolution can end this horrible economic disparity once and for all, thus freeing humanity in the truest sense of the word. ♦

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